

**REMARKS OF FCC COMMISSIONER AJIT PAI
AT THE TEXAS FORUM ON INTERNET REGULATION**

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY, BUSH SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC SERVICE

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I would like to begin by thanking Texas A&M's Bush School of Government and Public Service for hosting this morning's forum as well as the George Bush Presidential Library Foundation for its assistance in organizing this event. As a longtime admirer of our nation's 41st President, I am truly honored to be with you here today.

For those of us who have the privilege of holding public office, George H.W. Bush's career is a model to be emulated. Whether he was putting together the broad coalition overseas that won the first Gulf War or working at home to pass landmark bipartisan legislation like the Americans with Disabilities Act, President Bush displayed every day the professionalism and commitment to principle that we should expect of our nation's leaders. These are the same values that the Bush School instills in its students today.

Moreover, President Bush's work after leaving the White House shows that holding public office isn't a prerequisite to serving the American people. From assisting victims of Hurricane Katrina to promoting volunteerism, President Bush has been one of the "thousand points of light" that he spoke about during his address to the 1988 Republican National Convention, although his star certainly shines brighter than most. And there's one other thing about him that I should mention. Anyone who jumps out of an airplane on his 90th birthday is certainly more courageous than I am!

We are gathered here this morning to discuss Internet regulation. It therefore bears mention that the World Wide Web, including the first web browser, the first web server, and first web pages, were developed during President Bush's time in office. Back then, few could have imagined how quickly the Internet would become critical to our nation's economy, culture, and political discourse. But today, almost every part of American life is touched by broadband. And that's what makes this forum so important.

Our hearing today will focus on the Federal Communications Commission's Open Internet proceeding. The main questions at hand are whether the FCC should regulate Internet service providers' network management practices, and if so, what those rules should be. Twice the FCC has gone down this road. And twice we have lost in court. Now, the third time around, some have suggested that the FCC should classify broadband service as a telecommunications service and subject Internet service providers to public utility regulation, otherwise known as Title II. Some have said we should pursue other regulatory avenues. Others have said that new rules would be a solution in search of a problem. And still others have said if there's a problem to solve here, we should first go back to Congress for guidance.

To explore these topics, I am joined by an outstanding panel of experts from the Lone Star State. I'm grateful to them for agreeing to participate—to gig 'em while talking gigabits, if you will. My role this morning is primarily to listen and to learn, not to speak, so I'll keep my opening remarks brief. I've come to Texas because I believe that it's important for the FCC to get outside of the Beltway and directly engage Americans who will be impacted by our rules—not just Washington insiders.

That's why I was disappointed when the FCC decided to hold each one of its recent net neutrality roundtable discussions at our Washington headquarters. And that's why I wish that my colleagues were here with me today. On this issue and other critical issues, the FCC shouldn't be hiding in our nation's capital.

Today, I expect to hear some disagreements among our panelists as to what path the FCC should take when it comes to Internet regulation. But before we explore those disagreements, I'd like to start off mentioning areas where I believe there is likely common ground.

First, there is broad support for a free and open Internet. In 2004, then-FCC Chairman Michael Powell outlined four principles of Internet freedom: the freedom to access lawful content, the freedom to use applications, the freedom to attach personal devices to the network, and the freedom to obtain service plan information. One year later, the FCC unanimously endorsed these principles, and a bipartisan consensus has supported them ever since.

Respect for these four Internet freedoms has aided the Internet's tremendous growth over the last decade. It has shielded online competitors from anticompetitive practices. It has fostered long-term investments in broadband infrastructure. It has made the Internet an unprecedented platform for civic engagement, commerce, entertainment, and more. And it has made the United States the epicenter of online innovation. We should support the four Internet freedoms, and I am committed to protecting them going forward.

Second, we must remove barriers to deploying and investing in broadband networks. We need to set rules that encourage the private sector to expand and upgrade the infrastructure that underlies the Internet. We can't rest on our laurels. There must continue to be a business case for investing the tens of billions of dollars necessary to bring broadband access to more Americans, to increase broadband speeds, and to give consumers more choices. In other words, we need to focus on net capacity, not just net neutrality.

And third, when it comes to Internet regulation, the FCC should be open and transparent. The FCC currently has rules on the books that require broadband service providers to be transparent about how they manage their networks. We should live up to that same standard.

For example, the FCC has proposed a number of rules and has asked the public to comment on them. If the agency would like to make any changes to those proposed rules, it should make those changes public and allow for a new round of public comment. Any rules that we adopt in this area could have a substantial impact on our nation's economy. So it is critical that they receive a thorough public vetting. Too often, FCC regulations are the product of last-minute, backroom deals. That shouldn't happen here. And we shouldn't let well-paid lobbyists have inside information about what the Commission will be voting on while keeping the American people in the dark.

Turning back to today's forum, it's now time to introduce our panelists and listen to their opening statements. Following their remarks, I'll ask each of them some questions and allow them to respond to each other's views. Then, we will open it up to the audience to ask questions. I'm looking forward to a lively but civil discussion of these important issues, where everyone, in the spirit of President Bush, will be able to disagree without being disagreeable.